UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF GORDON HALL.

In the following extracts from letters of the late Rev. Gordon Hall, missionary at Bombay, we hear a voice, as from another world, calling upon the young men in our colleges and seminaries of learning, to go forth for the salvation of the perishing nations of the heathen world. They were addressed to the "Society of Inquiry respecting Missions, at Andover;" but are equally applicable to every candidate for the ministry, and to every young man, whose duty it may be to prepare for the sacred office. They have lain concealed among other letters of the Society too long. May they now be read with pious candor, and humble prayer, by every student, and produce the effect so ardently desired by the writer.

There are among you, brethren, some who have not yet decided whether it be their duty to go to the heathen or not. To such, I can say, beloved brethren, I know how to sympathize with you. Such, for a long time, was the anxious state of my own mind on the same subject. But now it astonishes me, to think that I so long hesitated on a subject so plain. It was no doubt my sin, though perhaps somewhat extenuated by circumstances which no longer exist. When my mind was first exercised on the subject, I knew of but one in the country, who thought of becoming a missionary to the heathen; and he has not as yet, to my knowledge, engaged in the work. Besides, through all my inquiries, until I had decided on the subject, it was not known that any support could be obtained in our country. I bless God, that notwithstanding all that opposed, I was enabled to decide as I did. I verily believe it will be matter of joy to me through eternity. Should you make the same decision, brethren, I have no doubt you will find the same satisfaction in it.

But you are not decided. Each of you anxiously inquires, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Shall I go to the heathen?" Here historical inquiries and geographical knowledge are of little avail. The decision must be made in view of *one single command*, and *one single fact*. Jesus Christ, the God of our salvation, has commanded his disciples to "go into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature*." This is the *command*. But even at this day, there are *six eighths* of the population of the globe, to whom the gospel *has not been preached*. This is the *fact*. In view of this *command* and of this *fact*, how ought you to decide?

Eighteen hundred years ago, Christ gave this perpetual command; and to quicken his disciples in the obedience of it, he gave them the most consoling assurances of assistance, and promises of unbounded reward. But from century to century, so remiss have been his disciples in obeying the command, so unwilling to go into *all* the world, and preach the gospel to *every* creature, that, may we not with propriety, consider the Holy Trinity as saying, "Whom shall we send, and who will go for us?" Is it your duty to reply, "Here am I, Lord, send me"? This is the inquiry, and how simple! What have protracted researches to do with such a decision? When the apostles first received their commission, was it an extensive knowledge of the population, religions, manners and customs of the various nations, to whom they were bid to go, which led them to obey

the command? Was it a retrospective view of the former success of religion in this guilty world, or was it the prospect of an easy entrance unto the heathen, and a secure and comfortable residence among them, which made them so ready to go forth, at the command of their Redeemer? No: it was their love to Jesus, and their reverence for his authority, which forced them to exclaim, "Wo is unto me if I preach not the gospel," as I have been commanded. It is when missionaries form their decisions on the same ground, that they eminently glorify Christ, and build upon a foundation which no storms can shake.

I have been led to these remarks, from an apprehension that there are young men, who are pursuing missionary inquiries in a too general way, with a kind of indefinite expectation, that by and by something may transpire, some further knowledge of countries or events may be acquired, or the subject may be presented in some new attitude, which will render their decision easy and safe. Any such expectation, it appears to me, tends only to darken the mind, and to confuse and enervate its operations.

The subject is more plain and easy of decision at the present day, if possible, than at any former period. What has been found and acknowledged a *truth* in England, and in some of the other European states, is now found by experiment to be true in America. God has promised, that he that *watereth*, shall be *watered* also *himself*.

This gracious promise he has verified, by uniformly causing religion to flourish among nations at home, in the same proportion in which they are active in promoting missions abroad. The whole subject, then, is brought into this narrow compass:—The great mass of mankind have not yet heard the gospel preached;—the standing command of Christ to his disciples is, "go and evangelize all nations;" and to prompt them to a full compliance, he gives the assurance, both by his promise, and its fulfilment, that by their exertions for the salvation of the heathen, they do most effectually labor for the salvation of their own countrymen. In this simple form, let the subject be viewed. In this simple form, let it come to the reason, the conscience, and the feelings of every one, who is looking forward to the gospel ministry. How can the conviction be resisted? How can the decision be doubtful?

Dear brethren, bear with my freedom. Placed as I am, in the midst of so many millions of perishing heathen, and knowing from the promise of Jehovah, (Prov. xi. 25,) "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself," that your coming forth would tend to promote religion at home, surely I have a claim on your indulgence.

Allow me, then, to speak freely. To me, it appears unaccountable, how *so many* young men, by covenant devoted to Christ, can deliberately and prayerfully inquire, whether it is their duty to become missionaries, and yet *so few* feel effectually persuaded that it is their duty to come forth to the heathen! It tends greatly to the discouragement of those who are already in the field. While so great a proportion of those, who examine this point of duty, deliberately decide that it *is not their duty* to engage in the missionary work, what are we to think?

In general, those who excuse themselves from the work, must do it for general reasons, which would be as applicable to others as to themselves, and which would excuse those who have gone forth to the work, as well as themselves. Therefore, must not those men who thus excuse them-

selves, think either that those who engage in the missionary work do wrong, or that themselves who decline it, do wrong?

Here it would ill become the solemnity of the subject, to cavil and quibble, and say: "What! shall we *all* go to the heathen? Then what will become of our own countrymen?" Let such quibblers beware how they mock the faithfulness of God. When *thousands* have gone forth to the heathen, and God has failed to fulfil his promise, that he that watereth, shall be watered also himself, or when he shall not have caused religion to flourish among the people at home, in proportion as they labor for the heathen abroad, then, and not till then, let the objection be heard.

Some seem to speak as though a man must have some secret or special call, before he can decide in favor of being a missionary. If, on rational grounds, he feels persuaded that he ought to be a minister *any where*, and if he *feels disposed* to go to the heathen, I should think that no other call than this, unless in extraordinary cases, can reasonably be required. I have doubted whether I ought to be a missionary; but it was for the same reasons for which I ought to doubt, whether it was right for me to be a *minister any where.*

Brethren, you see that I think there are good reasons, why you should become missionaries to the heathen, and of course good reasons why I should desire it. Certainly I do. And I greatly long to see every one of you strenuously exerting himself to diffuse the same sentiments among all the pious young men in the country.

Form *great* plans, and execute them with great *zeal* and *prayerfulness.* Every thing that can be desired, *might* be done by exertion, with God's blessing. Seize every possible opportunity for impressing the subject upon the mind of every pious youth. But I must stop.

Brethren, pray for us. May the Spirit of God be with you, guide you in all your deliberations, and make you the instruments of winning many souls to Christ.

Your affectionate brother and fellow-servant,

G. Hall.

Bombay, June 19, 1815.

Dearly beloved brethren,—When I attempt to say any thing on the subject of missions, I am often greatly perplexed and distressed. This does not arise from a belief, like the maxim of the worthy Moravians, "that none should be *persuaded* to engage in Missions." Believing, as I cannot but believe, that Christ has given it in perpetual charge to his disciples, to see that his gospel is preached in all the world, to every creature, and that this is an indispensable duty binding upon every individual Christian according to the rank which he holds in the church, I can see no good reason why they should not be persuaded to the performance of this duty as well as any other. No other duty involves, to an equal extent, both the glory of God and the happiness of men. In the same degree in which the duty is performed, will the consequences be happy; and so far as the duty is neglected, in the same degree that neglect brings guilt to Christians, dishonor to God, and ruin to the souls of men. Why, then, should we not persuade Christians to the performance of this duty?

No: my embarrassment is of very different origin. When I advance any of the arguments, which show that Christians ought immediately to use the proper, the adequate means for evangelizing the whole world, and that it is the duty of every individual without exception, to exert himself

with a zeal, activity, and faith, proportionate to the magnitude of the work; every argument and motive seems like telling those to whom I write, that they need to be convinced that the Son of God has died for sinners, that there is salvation in no other, and that the salvation of souls is a matter of great importance. In a word, it seems like telling them that they are not Christians.

For what is it to be a Christian? Not merely to bear the name of Christ, but to have his divine image impressed on our souls and manifested in our lives. Jesus had a heart, which embraced every human being with a love that made him willing to suffer poverty and disgrace, anguish and death, for their salvation. And how can *his* heart be like the heart of Jesus, how can *he* be a Christian, who does not love all mankind with a love which makes him willing to suffer the loss of all temporal things, and even to lay down his life, if thereby he can promote the salvation of his fellow men? That such is the duty of Christians, is a truth as conspicuous in the Scriptures as the sun in the heavens.

How comes it to pass then, that a duty so great, so solemn, and so plain, has been so far overlooked and neglected by the great mass of Christians? This is a phenomenon in religion, which, in some respects, strongly resembles that monster of irreligion and barbarity, which the progress of moral illumination has almost exploded from the Christian world. Now, when the heart even of the unprincipled ruffian recoils at the enormities of injustice and barbarity of that human traffic which has long filled all Africa with lamentation and wo, how hard is it for us to believe, that, a few years ago, all Christian nations were the advocates of this infamous commerce in human beings! But such has been the progress of light, and such the revolution of conscience on this subject, that now, should any man advocate the slave-trade, and at the same time profess to be a follower of Jesus, he would be esteemed a prodigy of inconsistency.

But such great changes cannot take place without great exertions. Great effects require powerful causes. When a great nation is to be aroused to a sense of its duty—when the slave-trade—a commerce participated by all Christendom, bringing wealth and luxury to thousands, and confirmed by the lapse of centuries—when such a commerce is to be annihilated, a *Clarkson* must come forward. He must consecrate his life and his all to the object. He must study day and night, explore every corner of the kingdom for materials, write his pamphlets and his books—print them at his own expense—distribute them with his own hand, and employ all possible means for engaging individuals and the public in favor of the object. Societies and associations must every where be formed on purpose for devising ways and means for enlightening and persuading the public mind, and the object must be pursued with increasing exertions, whatever may be the expense or labor, until it is accomplished.

So when the prisoner's woes are to be mitigated, a *Howard* must arise, openly espouse, and zealously plead the cause of suffering humanity; and travel from prison to prison, and from country to country, with the same self-denial, activity, zeal, and perseverance.

Why did these men do and suffer so much? That they might relieve thousands of their fellow beings from the pressure of *temporal* wo—an object, a work, for which the blessings of multitudes have already come upon them.

But what does *he* strive for, who labors to persuade the churches to evangelize the world? He labors for that which will relieve from temporal

wo, seven eighths of the human race. For where the pure, peaceable religion of Christ does not prevail, there mankind groan under a multitude of temporal evils which flee before the approaching light of the gospel.

But this is not all. No: he labors for that which will redeem a vast proportion of the whole *world*, both from temporal and eternal misery.

By what an infinite difference then does this latter object surpass in magnitude, those for which Clarkson and Howard did and suffered so much, and were so justly and highly commended!

Yet from the days of the apostles to the present moment, no individuals have appeared among the churches to plead the cause of the unevangelized world, with such enlarged views and such an entire devotedness to the object, as these philanthropists evinced in the pursuit of their plans for removing the temporal sufferings of comparatively a trifling portion of mankind.

The common feelings of humanity and the ordinary impressions of the Christian religion, had formed in the minds of Christendom a predisposition to the abolition of the slave-trade. Nothing was wanting but the application of the appropriate means. The public needed only to be convinced that the slave-trade was a heaven-daring wickedness, and that to persist in it would be no better than renouncing the obligations of Christianity.

Very similar is the case of the churches in regard to their duty of publishing the gospel in all the world, to every creature. That Spirit of Christ, which has always pervaded his churches, holds his people in readiness continually to fly into every corner of the world to preach his gospel, as soon as the proper means are employed to awaken them to a sense of their duty.

As yet, these means have not been employed, and Christians do not understand their duty in this respect. It avails nothing to say that missionary sermons are preached, missionary societies formed, and missionaries sent forth in various directions.

Reckon up the multitudes who have never yet been told that Jesus tasted death for every man; and it will be found that there is not more than one Protestant missionary to 20,000,000 of souls, who are this moment perishing for lack of that knowledge, which, 1800 years ago, the merciful Redeemer commanded his disciples immediately to impart.

Again: estimate the number of Christians who may with propriety be said to be exerting themselves for the universal spread of the gospel, and how small a proportion do they bear to the whole mass of Christians! When we consider what a very small part of Christians are engaged in the work, and what a very trifling part of the work has been accomplished, it is apparent that the subject needs to be taken up as though *nothing* had been done. Not that we should despise the day of small things, but rather thank God for them and take courage. All that has yet been done when compared with *nothing*, is every thing; but compared with what Christians *ought* to do, it is *nothing*.

Yes, the subject needs to be brought before the churches as entirely and thoroughly as though nothing had been done.

In doing this, three things are necessary.—Christians must be convinced that it is their duty to evangelize the whole world—they must be convinced of the means to be employed in accomplishing this—and that Christians may be convinced of these two things, adequate means must be employed to enlighten and persuade their minds on this momentous subject.

Christians must be convinced that it is their *duty* to evangelize all nations. Could Christ mean any thing less than this when he commanded his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature?—when he commanded them expressly to go and teach, or evangelize, all nations?

How can any one who pretends to be a Christian, think to shift off this duty by saying that the command was given to the apostles, in an age when the gospel was to be spread through the world in a miraculous manner; or that it refers to a future glorious period of the church, when Christ will in some wonderful way bring all nations to a knowledge of the truth? It might with equal propriety be said that the moral precepts of Christ were not given to be obeyed, except in the days of the apostles or in the millennium.

What! are not the souls of men as precious, is not the blood of Christ as efficacious, is not the power of the Holy Spirit as effectual, is not Christ as worthy to be obeyed, in one generation as in another? Christ did mean that his disciples should go and preach his gospel in all the world, and that they should continue to preach it through all ages.

Nor would he have his people esteem it an *irksome* and *painful duty*. No: It was for the joy that was set before him, the joy of having the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, that he endured the cross, despising the shame. When to this end he descended from the throne in heaven to the manger in Bethlehem, then it was that the angels of God flew with a like joy to proclaim to the shepherds that a Saviour was born, and shouted the new anthem: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to men." With the same transporting joy would Christ have his people seize the glorious message, and fly into all the world to proclaim—"A Saviour is born, Christ the Lord; he has tasted death for every man; look unto him and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

To be zealously engaged for the diffusion of these glad tidings through the world, is no less than to be engaged in putting Christ in possession of the heathen, of the ends of the earth, of that inheritance for which he so joyfully endured the pains of the cross. It is laboring to build up and complete that blessed kingdom which is to exist forever, and to be the glory of God and the joy of all holy beings in the universe.

Now, how grievous it must be to Christ to find that his people think it a *grievous* duty to be made co-workers with him in perfecting his glorious kingdom! Though the duty should call them to the loss of *all things*—to poverty—to pains—and to death itself—still, how can they think the duty hard! How can they be so unwilling to be as their Lord and Master?

Angels would gladly do the work, but the noble privilege is reserved for *men*. Is it possible that Christians should shrink from the duty? Considering what the duty is, and what an infinite weight of motives urges to a prompt performance of it, we should answer, No.

But looking at the fact, we must say they do, with but few exceptions, *all* shrink from the duty, and leave it undone, and the heathen to perish in consequence of their neglect!

Christians must be convinced of the *means* to be employed for evangelizing the world. They must be informed how many hundred millions are now perishing; and how many times ten thousand missionaries must be sent to them, or they cannot be saved. They must be convinced that the churches are *able* to do all this.

In Christendom there are young men enough, if they were only *disposed* to deny themselves, take their commission from Christ, and go forth to the work. The churches have money enough, and might send them, if Christians were only willing to consecrate what God has given them, to a work which would bring everlasting glory to Christ and such inconceivable happiness to men.

If professing Christians would lop off their superfluities in dress, equipage, eating and drinking, and reduce their expenses to the wholesome limits of gospel simplicity, and devote the money thus redeemed to the great work, the missionary treasury would soon contain its millions. Christians need to have this laid before them in figures.

But Christ demands more than these crumbs. As he requires our *whole heart* to be given to him, so he requires all that we have, and our life itself, to be voluntarily made over to him, and employed in such a way as shall most effectually advance his glorious work of saving souls. The privilege of doing this is as great as the duty is solemn and momentous.

But *who* must be convinced of all this? Not missionaries only—not ministers—not bodies of Christians—but every individual who belongs to Christ, of whatever denomination, age, or sex. Every one has a part to act. All must firmly embrace the object in their hearts, and support it daily by their prayers. In this part of the duty there is no difference between the rich and the poor.

Parents must devote their sons to the work, and their sons must consecrate themselves to it. Here, again, all, the rich and the poor, have an equal privilege of advancing the kingdom of the Redeemer. Every one must exhort and animate his neighbors to the work. Societies for promoting the work must every where be formed—the rich must give liberally, and the widow cast in her mite. Some must be employed in looking out suitable young men, to be educated; others must educate them. Young men must offer themselves to the churches, and the churches must send them forth.

Innumerable are the ways and means of promoting the work. These will multiply and discover themselves more and more as the work advances. Christians will be quick to discover them, when they are once convinced of their duty and persuaded to do it. The very first thing necessary in the great work, therefore, is, to employ the proper means for convincing Christians of their duty and of the manner of performing it.

But, alas! it seems to be thought enough that a few missionary sermons be preached and printed in a few scattering counties; and that by them Christians will learn their duty!

It was not thus, that England was convinced of the sin of the slave-trade—it was not thus, that all Christendom was roused to a zeal, which sacrificed property and life in visionary plans for plucking Jerusalem from the hands of the infidels, and for planting the banner of the cross upon the walls of the holy city, by a crusade.—O that a Peter, a Clarkson and a Howard, might arise in the churches to plead the cause of the unevangelized nations with a zeal proportionate to the magnitude of that cause! In awakening the churches to this work, let every minister be a Peter, every candidate for the ministry a Clarkson, and every deacon a Howard. Then, something would be done.

As yet, a considerable portion even of the clergy can hardly be said to be on the side of missions. They do not inform themselves on the subject at large, they do not preach about it, and of course their churches

remain ignorant of their duty. What can be done unless ministers are engaged?

How important that every minister should thoroughly acquaint himself with the subject, and zealously engage in advancing the object! Then he would preach often and faithfully to his people about it, and his church would know their duty and be ready to do it. O that ministers every where would do this! Then all the churches would at once be prepared to act—there would be hope concerning the heathen.

Small pamphlets on the subject should be prepared with the greatest care and ability; printed in great numbers and in constant succession; gratuitously distributed; put into the hands of every minister of every persuasion, to be distributed in every corner of the country. Such pamphlets would find their way to many persons where the preacher's voice is not heard.

Societies should be formed in every direction, whose object should be to devise ways and means of convincing Christians of their duty and of persuading them to do it without delay.

Dear brethren, I must send my letter without finishing, and what I have written unrevised, as my time is unexpectedly cut short.

O fly for the salvation of the heathen, and for the glory of Christ among the Gentiles. Persuade a thousand to come.

Pray for us. The Lord fit you to do his will and pleasure in all things.

Your brother and fellow-servant in Christ,

GORDON HALL.

NOTE.—There are in the United States, 1,500,000 members of evangelical churches. Supposing the average number of members in a church to be 75, it would require only one man from each church to supply the whole heathen world with one missionary to every 30,000 souls. This would be a number sufficient to place a Bible in every family, and with the aid of the press, and native assistants, make known the gospel to every creature. If, then, all the churches were animated with the spirit of Jesus Christ, could they not furnish *men* enough to supply the world with missionaries?

Again: suppose each church member to contribute $5 a year to purchase the Bibles, and support the missionaries. The sum would be $7,500,000. The expense of giving the Bible to every heathen family, in 30 years, would be $3,333,333 a year, leaving $4,166,666, which would support 6,944 missionaries, at a salary of $600 a year. If the number of church members should continue to increase in the same ratios as at present, it would be, in 1837, not far from 2,280,000. Contributing, as before, $5 a year, they would support 13,127 missionaries. In 1842, ten years from the present time, the number of church members would be not less than 3,300,000, and they would support 21,944 missionaries, or more than enough to give the gospel to every human being. The work, then, can be done. For who can doubt the ability of the members of the churches generally, to give $5 a year for this object? Almost any one might save it from the expenses of the table, or of dress, by the practice of a little more economy, or self-denial; or might earn it by a little increase of industry. Christians pay much more for articles of mere luxury and fashion, than would be necessary to defray the expense of evangelizing the world.